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SUBJECT: UK VIEWS IN ADVANCE OF THE MARCH 30-31 FOREIGN
MINISTERS MEETING (GYMNICH)

REF: SECSTATE 37792

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Maura Connelly for reasons
1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (U) UK priorities for the upcoming GYMNICH meeting are maintaining EU unity in support of 1) Ahtisaari's Kosovo plan; 2) a "middle ground" approach to the new Palestinian Unity Government, and 3) moving forward on EU-specific Iran sanctions. Martin Shearman, the Foreign Office's European Correspondent provided Pol Counselor with the following comments in response to ref on March 28:

¶2. (C) KOSOVO. London's goal for the GYMNICH is to maintain EU unity in support of Ahtisaari's plan. UK's readout from pre-GYMNICH discussions is that the "usual problem members" are moving in the right direction -- Sherman said the Slovaks in particular have made recent positive statements. Other EU members with "doubts" about Ahtisaari's plan, such as the Spanish and Greeks, are signaling they will put those doubts behind the need for EU consensus on Ahtisaari's plan, at least at this point in the final settlement process. Shearman added that it is increasingly important for wavering EU Members, such as Italy and Spain, to hear that the USG is prepared to make Kosovo a priority with Russia.

¶3. (C) ISRAEL-PALESTINE. Shearman described a spectrum of views among EU Members on engaging with the new National Unity Government (NUG): from those states that want to maintain a policy of no contact with any of the NUG's elements, to states that are prepared to fully deal with all components of the NUG right now. Shearman described the UK position's on this spectrum as "in the middle," and said London is waiting to judge the NUG on its actions. The UK's goal is to keep the EU on this middle ground for now, but, Shearman added, there is a growing belief within the EU that it must find some way to engage with the NUG soon or else President Abbas will become increasingly isolated.

¶4. (C) IRAN. London is "generally" pleased with progress made on the implementation of EU-specific sanctions on Iranian entities and continues to work for additional targeted sanctions, according to Shearman. The UK will raise the Iranian seizure of UK naval personnel and expects a statement calling for their immediate release.

¶5. (C) EUROPEAN NEIGHBORHOOD POLICY (ENP). The UK is "in agreement" with ref points on this issue, Shearman said. The UK particularly agrees with the USG on the need to keep Belarus outside of the ENP until there are tangible human rights improvements, but Shearman added, "you need to be making that point to Berlin."

¶6. (C) SUDAN. Under "other matters," the UK will make the

case for stepping up pressure on the Sudanese Government through the UNSC; if there is no UNSC action, the UK intends to lay the groundwork for greater (unspecified by Shearman) EU action.

17. (C) MISSILE DEFENSE. Shearman's latest information was that the Germans might raise the missile defense issue under "other matters," but this was not confirmed. If the Germans do raise the issue for general discussion, the UK will not engage in a debate, leaving that to the Poles and Czechs if they so want, but will underscore that no EU action is appropriate or called for at this time.

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